

On Aristophanes, Plato, and Socrates

RESPONSE TO HALL

ALLAN BLOOM
University of Toronto

[Plato in the Republic] sought and made a city more to be prayed for than hoped for . . . not such that it can possibly be but one in which it is possible to see the meaning [ratio] of political things. [Cicero, Republic II 52]

I am grateful to Professor Hall for a number of reasons, especially for the seriousness with which he has taken my interpretation of the *Republic*. That he disagrees with it is secondary. We do agree on the fundamental thing: it is of utmost importance to understand Plato.

The issues raised by Hall are enormous, and an adequate response to his arguments would require volumes, but what we really disagree about is how to read Plato. He asserts that I read my prejudices into the text. I respond that he does not pay sufficient attention to the text. In looking at a few of his central criticisms, I shall attempt to prove my contention and show the characteristic errors of his approach to the Platonic dialogue.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Hall is quite right in saying that my interpretation of the Republic is derivative from that of Leo Strauss. It is the nature of derivative works to be on a lower level than those from which they stem. There is much in Strauss' interpretation that I have understood, but there is also surely much that I have not understood. I cannot speak for him. In what follows I refer only to my essay and leave Strauss' to speak for itself, as he would certainly have wished.

I

In the first place, Hall presupposes that he knows the Platonic teaching and reads his understanding of it into the text. Arguing against my contention that the best regime of the *Republic* is not a serious proposal, he tells us, "Socrates is explicit that his *polis* is natural." I search in vain for Socrates' statement to that effect. Indeed, I know of no assertion anywhere in the Platonic corpus that the city is natural or that man is by nature a political animal. Whatever the *ideas* may be—and they are the highest and most elusive theme to which we must ascend very carefully and slowly from the commonly sensed particulars—there is not the slightest indication that there is an *idea* of the city or of the best city, as there is said to be an *idea* of the beautiful or an *idea* of the just. What the omission means is debatable, but one must begin by recognizing that it is so. Obviously, from the point of view of the *ideas*, the naturalness of the city must have a status very different from that of, for example, man. The kallipolis cannot participate in an *idea* which is not. While there are many men and an *idea* of man, the city does not exist as a particular or as a universal; it is neither sensed nor intellected.

Careful observation of what the text says about this question of naturalness would have helped Hall. In his discussion of the three waves of paradox in Book V, Socrates says (a) the same education and way of life for women as for men is possible because it is natural (456b-c); (b) the community of women and children is not against nature (466d)—however, now Socrates shifts the criterion of possibility from naturalness to coming into being (many things which are not natural, and even against nature, can come into being); (c) the coincidence of philosophy and rule is just that, coincidence or chance (473c-d). All the attention is given to the possibility of that highly improbable coincidence. Cities, let alone the best city, do not come into being as do plants and animals. Some men are by nature fit both to philosophize and to rule in the city, but it is not said that it is natural that they do so. If they actually do both, the cause is art, human making, not nature. If I were to use against Hall the methods he uses against me, I would say that, with respect to the naturalness of the city, he has read Aristotle's *Politics*, not Plato's *Republic*. He does not see that the city is more problematic for Plato than for Aristotle.

Just as Hall reads in, he reads out. In trying to argue that for Plato there is no significant distinction between the theoretical and the practical life, he says that Plato "does not suggest that philosophising

and ruling are unrelated functions." Compare that to the text: "each of [the philosophers] will go to ruling as a necessary as opposed to a good thing . . . if you discover a life better than ruling for those who are going to rule, it is possible that your well-governed city will come into being. . . . Have you another life that despises political offices other than that of true philosophy? . . . But men who aren't lovers of ruling [they love something other: wisdom] must go to it" (521a-b). The philosophers won't be willing to act [engage in *praxis*] (519c). There could be no more radical distinction made between the practical and theoretical lives than that drawn in Books V-VII and IX of the *Republic* (cf. especially 476a-b). The separateness of the forms is strongly asserted, as are the possibilities of a reason using only forms without admixture of the senses and a life lived in contemplation of the forms purely. This latter life is the best life, the only good life. It is precisely the difference between it and the life of ruling that is the artifice that is supposed to make the city work. Deed and speech are also radically distinguished, and the latter is said to be absolutely superior.¹ I really find it hard to imagine how Hall is able to say the things he does in the face of the evidence to the contrary. I challenge him to find a single statement in the *Republic* that indicates that the philosophic life requires ruling or that the activity of ruling in any way contributes to philosophizing.² What is striking about the *Republic* is the distance Socrates puts between the theoretical and practical lives, a distance belied by things he says elsewhere and by his own life. But that is what he does here, and, as Hall says, "we are accustomed to taking Socrates seriously." There is simply not a scintilla of proof that the making, painting, or "creating" activity of the founders of the city is a part of the philosopher's life as such. Hall piles abstraction on abstraction, unrelated to the text, in order to *construct* a case for the sameness of the two lives, but he has no evidence. The most striking aspect of the last half of his paper is its almost entirely personal character and almost total absence of reference to text. It is true, as he says, that the potential philosophers must be compelled to leave the cave as well as return to it. But once out, they recognize how good it is to be out. They never see a reason to go back, and compelling them to go back is said to be good for the city, not the philosophers. If they thought it good to go back, they would not be good rulers. It is only by going out that they became aware that the kallipolis is a cave, nay Hades, and to be in it is as to be a shade (516d; 521c; cf. 386c). In the midst of his complex prestidigitatory activity, Hall announces that it is because I am a modern political scientist that I cannot see

that Platonic ruling is really philosophizing. I would like to accept that testimonial to impress some of my colleagues who have their doubts about the genuineness of my credentials as a political scientist, but unfortunately the explanation does not work. Again, one must look at the text. Rulers, in the best city, provide for food, clothing, and shelter, and they lead the soldiers to war. Above all, Hall forgets the reasons the philosophers are invoked: they are primarily match-makers or eugenicists who have to spend a great deal of time and subtlety on devising "throng[s] of lies and deceptions" designed to get the right people to have sexual intercourse with one another (458d-460b). Is that a philosophic activity?

Displaying the same tendency to neglect what is really in the text, Hall spins a subtle web of reasonings about a Platonic notion of happiness which is frankly beyond my comprehension, a notion evidently intended to overcome the tensions between philosophy and ruling. In this context he insists that "Plato, clearly, does not define *eudaimonia* in terms of felt satisfaction . . . and the personal happiness of the philosophers is not his primary desideratum." Now, the culmination of the whole dialogue—the judgment concerning the happiness of the unjust man versus that of the just man, which was demanded by Glaucon at the beginning of the dialogue and was its explicit motive—concerns, if I understand what Hall means by *personal* happiness, the personal happiness of the philosopher (576b-588a). The terms of the comparison have been quietly changed during the course of the dialogue from the unjust man versus the just man to the tyrant versus the philosopher. Three tests are made, all three of which are won by the philosopher. The first test is self-sufficiency: the philosopher can get the good things he desires without needing or depending on other men while the tyrant lives in fear and is full of unsatisfiable desires because of his dependency on men. The other two tests prove that the philosopher is the expert *par excellence* in pleasure and that he experiences the purest and most intense pleasures. Socrates calculates that the philosopher's life is 729 times more pleasant than the tyrant's. Is this not "felt satisfaction" of a wholly personal kind? Philosophy is presented as choiceworthy on the ground that it provides permanently accessible pleasures for the individual, and the philosopher here is not presented as ruling or in any way concerned with the city.

In addition to making Plato answer his own questions rather than discovering what Plato's questions are and distorting the phenomena by casting a gray web of abstraction around them rather than letting them come to light in their fullness and complexity, Hall moralizes, not open to the possibility that justice is not preached in the *Republic*

but rather questioned and investigated. For example, so sure is he that benefiting one's fellow man is an imperative of Plato's thought that he does not take note of the fact that the city has no concern for other cities and is even willing to harm and stir up factions in them, supporting the inferior elements, solely to keep them from threatening it. Best would be isolation, and next best is crippling one's neighbor; never would it try to improve them (422a-423a). Since the soul is said to be like the city, would not it, too, be concerned only with itself? The vulgar standards of just conduct to which the well-ordered soul is said to conform are all negative—things it does not do, such as stealing, lying, and committing adultery (442e-443a). As was indicated early on, Socrates' just man does no harm; he is not said to do good, to be a benefactor (335d). And the reason why the well-ordered soul does not do harm becomes clear when it is revealed to be the philosophic soul. The philosopher's abstinences are not due to good will, a Kantian "settled and sincere disposition to behave justly," but to a lack of caring for the vulgar things on which the vulgar standards are founded. His passionate love of wisdom makes him indifferent to, for example, money (485d-486b). This is no more praiseworthy than a eunuch's abstinence from rape. There is no "moral" motive involved.³ It escapes Hall that of the three classes in the city, two have no concern for the common good at all—the artisans are in it for gain or out of fear, and the philosophers are there because they are compelled to be—while the dedicated class, the warriors, are dedicated only because they believe in a lie and are deprived of any possibility of privacy. There is, on the evidence of the *Republic*, no enlightened, nonillusionary love of the common good. The virtues of the warriors are finally said to belong more to the body than to the soul, to be mere habits (518d-e). The only authentic virtue is that of the mind contemplating its proper objects. It is not I who Aristotelianize. The *Republic* is not the *Ethics*; there are no moral virtues in it.

I have chosen to mention these points because they help to illustrate what is required to read a Platonic dialogue; and Plato intended to make the requirements for reading him identical to those for philosophizing; his little world is the preparation for the big world. In fine, what is needed is an openness to things as they appear unaided by the abstractions which so impoverish things that they can no longer cause surprise or wonder and a freedom from a moralism which forbids us to see what in nature defies convention and refuses to console us in our hopes and fears.

II

My difference with Hall can be summarized by saying that he does not take the form of the dialogue seriously, that he does not begin where it fairly cries out for us to begin, with the story or the drama, with those pictures of life on the basis of which we might generalize about life and which are so much more accessible to us than are "Plato's metaphysics" or the *ideas*. If I may be permitted an Aristotelian expression, but one which is of Platonic inspiration, we must begin from the things which are first according to us in order to ascend to the things which are first according to nature. We must talk about shoemakers and pilots and dogs and such things, the Socratic themes so despised by his less wise interlocutors. I can appreciate Hall's opinion that there is something mad in the assertion that a work of political philosophy which argues that philosophers should be kings actually means that philosophers should not be kings. But if we were to suppose for a moment that this is not precisely a book of political philosophy, at least such as we know books of political philosophy to be, but is a drama at one moment of which one of the characters makes an unusual proposal that is designed to affect the action, as are so many speeches in dramas, then the paradoxical character of my interpretation disappears. The tale would go roughly as follows. Socrates visits the Piraeus in the company of a young man whom, according to Xenophon, he is trying to cure of excessive political ambition as a favor to his brother, Plato (Mem. III, vi). There they meet a group of men among whom is a famous intellectual who argues that justice is abiding by laws set down in the interest of the rulers. It is, therefore, in one's interest to be ruler or, put otherwise, to be a tyrant. Glaucon, evidently motivated by more than idle curiosity, asks Socrates to show him that justice (understood as concern for equality or law-abidingness) is a good outweighing all the obvious good things (pleasures and honors) which tyranny (understood as the peak of injustice) can procure. Socrates never precisely shows Glaucon that justice as Glaucon conceives it is good. Rather, in the course of founding a city and, thus, learning the nature of justice, Socrates introduces, as a political necessity, the philosophers. Glaucon learns that to be a ruler in the city he has founded he must be a philosopher. Then, when he is shown what philosophy is, he learns that it is the best life and is essentially independent of political life. From the point of view of philosophy—which Glaucon had not considered and, thus, had not considered as a good thing—the city looks like a cave or a prison.

The movement from rulers simply to philosophic rulers is a stage in Glaucon's liberation from the desire to rule. The dialogue has the character of an ascent, like the ascent from the cave to the region of the *ideas*. At the peak of that ascent Socrates reveals himself to be the happy man. He does not persuade Glaucon that he should not pursue his own good. He only makes him aware of goods to which the tyrant cannot attain and the pursuit of which takes away the temptation to meddle in politics and, hence, to be unjust as a tyrant is unjust. At the end of the comparison between the tyrant's and the philosopher's lives, close to the end of his education, Glaucon recognizes that the philosopher's city exists only in speech, and that no longer disturbs him. Socrates tells him it makes no difference whether it exists, for it can exist in the soul and that is enough (592a-b). A man can be happy being a good citizen of the city of philosophy without its existing. Timocrats and timocratic cities exist; democrats and democratic cities exist; tyrants and tyrannical cities exist; but, although there are no philosophical cities, philosophers exist. The tyrannical man who does not rule a city is not fully a tyrant (578b-c); the philosopher is a philosopher whether or not he is a king in a city. And there is, at this final stage, no suggestion that Glaucon should work to establish this city or that he should even long for its establishment. Glaucon has moved from the desire to be a ruler to the desire to be a ruler-philosopher to the desire to be a philosopher. The conceit of philosopher-kings was the crucial stage in his conversion. In the last word of the *Republic*, Odysseus—the archetype of the wise man—cured of love of honor or ambition and, having seen all the human possibilities, chooses the life of a private man who minds his own business. The *Republic*, while demonstrating Socrates' concern for justice, culminates in providing a foundation not for justice but for moderation.

Hall rightly concentrates on the statement that "unless philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings . . . philosophize . . . there is no rest from ills for the cities." That there will be no rest from ills for the cities is the teaching of the *Republic*, and this is what distinguishes ancient from modern philosophical politics. Socrates, moreover, does not suggest that there are ills of philosophy that would be cured by the union of wisdom and politics. The proposal is for the sake of the city, and not the philosopher. The distinction made in the discussion with Thrasymachus between justice as devotion to a community (be it band of thieves), which is only necessary, a means to an end (351c-d; 352c-d), and justice as perfection of the soul, which is good in itself (352d-354a), persists throughout. The philosophers' service to the

community is necessary, while their life of contemplation on the Isles of the Blessed is good (540b). The two senses of justice are never resolved into a single coherent one.

Hall's failure to read the dialogue as a dialogue, his unawareness of its movement, causes him to give undue weight to isolated phrases or passages torn from their contexts. His greatest error is to take the discussion of *logismos*—calculation or deliberation—in Book IV as providing a definition of the “natural function” (both words are Hall's, not Plato's) of reason rather than as a provisional statement corresponding to the incomplete stage of the argument and of the interlocutors' awareness. Following the parallel of the rulers in the city, who deliberate about the affairs of the city, reason first comes to light in the *Republic* as the element of the soul which calculates about the desires, deciding which should and which should not be indulged. This description is a consequence of the analogy between city and soul which is being pursued in the discussion. What has first been determined about the city is applied to the soul (although Socrates points out that the discussion is inadequate, 435c-d). What we get in Book IV is a plausible account of reason's activity in the affairs of daily life, an activity akin to that of rulers who deliberate about public affairs, one that supports the view that man and city are in perfect harmony. But after the emergence of philosophy in Book V, a totally different account of the rational part of the soul is given, one which shows that the parallel between city and soul breaks down. The highest reaches of the soul are said to long only to *see what is* (437c-487a; 509c-511e; 514a-518b; 532a-534d). Deliberation or calculation (*logismos*), which was the only attribute of the rational part of the soul given in Book IV, is no longer even mentioned. The opposition between desire and calculation which was the defining characteristic of calculation in the earlier passage is overcome and philosophy is described as a form of *eros* (485c; 499b). The contemplative activity of the soul is simply something entirely different from the deliberative activity of a ruling class in a city (533b). Such contemplation is alien to the rulers' ends, and as a body they possess no organ for it. What the soul really is is both a revelation and a surprise in Book V, and its almost accidental discovery changes everything. The philosophic part of the soul has no use for action, and deliberation is not part of its function (527d-528e); it does not calculate. One must look to the difference between *logismos* and *nous* to appreciate the significance of this development. *Logismos* is for action; *nous* is for itself. The rulers of the city are highest because they are most useful to the city and its nonphilosophic ends. Reason in the soul is highest because it is the end of man

and should be the end of the city. Unless ones reads the *Republic* as a drama, one does not see that it has a reversal and a discovery, that there is a peripety. Platonic books are closer in form to dramas than to treatises.

III

I have put off until the end discussion of what is only a subsidiary part of Hall's criticism—what he says about Plato's relation to Aristophanes. But this issue seems to me central to our differences. The elusive texture of Platonic thought—so different from our own—can, I believe, only be approached when one becomes aware of its peculiar combination of what we take to be poetry and philosophy. Or, put otherwise, Platonic philosophy is poetic, not merely stylistically but at its intellectual core, not because Plato is not fully dedicated to reason, but because poetry points to problems for reason that unpoetic earlier and later philosophy do not see and because poetic imagination properly understood is part of reason. The Socrates of the *Clouds*—an account of the early Socrates substantially confirmed by the Platonic Socrates (*Phaedo* 96a ff.)—was unpoetic, and this had something to do with his incapacity to understand political things. The Platonic Socrates can in some sense be understood as a response to the Aristophanic Socrates, or, more strongly stated, Socrates may have learned something from Aristophanes. The *Republic*, in one of its guises, is the proof that philosophers are not unpolitical (and it must not be forgotten that, according to all serious testimony, in particular that of Aristotle and Cicero, there was no political philosophy prior to Socrates), that they know the political things best and are most necessary for politics. Socrates, who in the *Clouds* stands aside, is neutral, in the dispute between the just and the unjust speeches, in the *Republic*—in a reference which is clearly to Aristophanes—presents himself as an unconditional partner of the just speech (*Clouds*, 896-7; *Republic*, 368b-c). And in the *Symposium* Aristophanes is Socrates' only serious competitor in the contest for the best praise of *eros*: only these two have some inkling of what *eros* really is. Socrates the philosopher shows that his valid interlocutor is Aristophanes the comic poet, and that he is Aristophanes' superior in politics and erotics. Until we can take Aristophanes seriously and Plato comically we shall not understand either. It is only our stiff pedantry that causes us to ignore Plato's countless allusions to Aristophanes. For us aca-

demics they simply cannot be important. Professor Plato must talk only to his fellow professors. My response is that we must look where Plato tells us to look and not where we think we should look.

Now Hall says he sees nothing funny in Book V. My assertion that there is something ridiculous about the two sexes exercising naked together is tossed off lightly by Hall by reference to a passage in Xenophon which does not exist. Hall really means Plutarch, and a glance at the appropriate passage will prove to him that boys and girls in Sparta did not exercise naked together. He, further, fails to understand me. I know that there was homosexuality in Greece. What I meant is that a legislator can consistently forbid homosexual relations and condemn the attractions connected with them (as did the Athenian and Spartan legislators), but he cannot do the same for heterosexual relations. Socrates explicitly says that those who exercise naked together, because they do so, will be sexually drawn to one another (458c-d). Senses of humor, I am aware, do differ, but imagination suggests that the external signs of those attractions on the playing fields might provide some inspiration for tasteless wits.

Similarly, Hall says that Socrates does not appeal to absurd premises in Book V. I do not think it is just my ethnocentrism which gives me the impression that it is absurd for Socrates to found his argument on the assertion that the difference between male and female is no more to be taken into account than the one between bald men and men with hair.

But, to speak meaningfully about the *Republic*'s debt to the *Ecclesiazusae*, we must say a few words about the meaning of that play. I shall not enter into the discussion as to whether Socrates really refers to Aristophanes' play. It is too evident to need discussion, and only lack of attention or the desire to quibble could cause one to deny the relation. To support the denial one has to invent schools of thought the existence of which has no basis in historical fact, or to invert all probabilities based on dates as well as capriciously to neglect the text. Socrates calls his new projects the *female drama* (451b-c), just as Aristophanes' play is his *female drama par excellence*. Socrates speaks repeatedly of comedy and laughter with respect to his proposals (e.g., 452a-b; 473c; 518a-b). One need only compare Praxagora's speech putting forth her revolutionary plan with Socrates' own speech to see the great similarities in tone and content (*Ecclesiazusae*, 583-709; *Republic*, 458-466a). There are several quotes from the *Ecclesiazusae* in the *Republic*, two of which I shall mention in what follows. It behooves us to follow the simple procedure of seeing what this means

on the basis of the evidence presented to us instead of fabricating ancient beliefs about which we know nothing to explain what we have not yet understood. The *Ecclesiazusae* and the *Republic* both show female rulers who establish total communism, i.e., communism of property and women and children. They are the only writings which ever presented this particular combination. The writer of the *Ecclesiazusae* is deemed worthy of a response in both the *Apology* and the *Symposium*. Why not in the *Republic*? It is improbable that the response is in the reverse direction because all of Aristophanes' mentions of Socrates are as an unpoetic, unpolitical, unerotic man, whereas Plato's Socrates is always countering those charges.

So let us look at the *Ecclesiazusae*. Hall tells us that "for Aristophanes' satire of such social arrangements to have had point, others must have recommended them quite seriously." On the basis of such reasoning we would be forced to say that someone must have seriously proposed that the birds be made gods or that a dung beetle be used to get to heaven and bring back Peace for Aristophanes to have invented such conceits. Why should these schemes not have been among the imaginative poetic novelties on which Aristophanes prided himself? Surely the hilarious schemes which animate every comedy of Aristophanes ridicule, or show the ridiculous aspect of, something important. But the explicit project of the heroes does not reveal the intended object; it must be sought in an understanding of the effect of the play as a whole. In the *Ecclesiazusae*, the point is really quite clear: Aristophanes extends the principle of Athenian democracy to the extreme and shows that it is absurd, and thereby shows the limits, or the problem, of that regime. Athens is ridiculed, not some anonymous political projector. The Athenians want equality or to abolish the distinction between rich and poor, have and have-not. Athens is in trouble, and it is popularly thought that salvation can be achieved only by reforms which realize the goals of its popular regime. New rulers, women, propose communism, the utter destruction of privacy, in order to insure dedication to the common good and allow all to share equally in all good things, in order to make the city one. This will be a city which comprehends everything and satisfies all human longings. Praxagora's reform is subjected to searching criticism in two great scenes: (a) Chremes in good faith gives all his property to the city when it is perfectly clear that other men will not. He appears as a decent fool because the roots of private property go too deep to be

torn out. Hence, inequality and selfishness would seem to be necessary concomitants of any political order. (b) A beautiful young man is forced to have sexual intercourse with a succession of ugly old hags. This is the application of the most radical, but also most necessary, reform connected with communism. What seems to be most private and most unequal by nature must become subject to the public sector, or there will be have-nots in the most extreme and important sense, and the young and the beautiful will have profound reservations in their commitment to civil society. This powerful and unsurpassedly ugly scene lays bare the absurdity of trying to make politics total, of trying to make an equal distribution of all that is rare, special, and splendid, of allowing nothing to escape or transcend the political order. It reveals the tension between *physis* and *nomos*, nature and civil society. By hypothesizing a perfect social union, Aristophanes lets his audience see for itself that it would be a hell, that some things must remain private and that men must accept the inconsistencies of a community which leaves much to privacy. The actualization of the Athenian goal is not to be desired.

Socrates adopts the premise of the *Ecclesiazusae*: for there to be a community, everything must be made public; above all there must be a community of women and children. In a passage that is all but a direct quote from the *Ecclesiazusae* (461c-d; *Ecclesiazusae*, 634-9), Glaucon asks how the citizens would recognize their close kin, to which Socrates responds, as did Praxagora, that they will not. Neither of these great reformers is worried about incest, the prohibition against which is most sacred and seems to be the backbone of both family and city. Their reform is far-reaching indeed.

But this defiance of *nomos* in Plato's picture does not turn out to be ugly or ridiculous, and we should therefore conclude that Plato thought Aristophanes to be wrong about the intransigent character of *nomos*, the impossibility of perfect communism and the transpolitical nature of *eros*. Aristophanes' hostility to philosophy made him miss the crucial point: philosophers, those consummate liars, could make it all work. Because he did not understand philosophy, Aristophanes thought the political problem to be insoluble. The focus of the issue for both Praxagora and Socrates is sexual affairs, and Socrates acts as though he can handle them as Praxagora could not. Useless philosophy proves to be most useful. Socrates as the replacement for

Praxagora to turn failure into success is the Platonic improvement on Aristophanes' female drama.

Now it must be noted that Socrates is not introducing some grave, ponderous scholar as ruler. Philosophers as types were as yet essentially unknown and hardly respectable. The public model of the philosopher is that silly little fellow in the basket who makes shoes for gnats in the *Clouds*. Socrates dares to say that he is the perfect ruler. The comedy consists partly in Socrates' bringing together two of Aristophanes' plays, the *Clouds* and the *Ecclesiazusae*, using the ridiculous character of the one to solve the ridiculous problem of the other. The philosophers will see to it that the beautiful sleep with the ugly for the public good and do so without disorder or dissatisfaction.

So all is well. But now Socrates adds his scene, akin to those of Aristophanes. We get a glimpse of the relation of the philosopher to the multitude. Socrates follows Aristophanes' procedure. He makes the proposal and then lets his audience see it in action, letting them judge its actualization for themselves. Socrates uses the same language about the philosopher's relation to the multitude that one of the old hags uses to the beautiful young man: their intercourse is a Diomedean necessity (*Ecclesiazusae*, 1028-1029; *Republic*, 493c-494a). The multitude can never know or properly use the beautiful, but it will make the beautiful its slave. Aristophanes' comic scene is repeated on a higher level. The impossible and undesirable thing is the forced intercourse of philosophy and the city. The city, which once looked beautiful, has become ugly, and it compels what has now come to light as the truly beautiful. Hag is to boy as city is to philosopher. The privileged *eros* is philosophic *eros*. The differences between Aristophanes and Socrates have to do with the old war between philosophy and poetry, and here we can do no more than mention it and point out that it is what we must study. They agree about the limits of the city with respect to the highest things. Socrates uses Aristophanes' mad conceits to highlight both of these points. The political result of the inquiry of the *Republic* is revealed in the *Laws*, Plato's discussion of an actualizable regime. There the fundamental compromise is made: private property is accepted. It follows immediately that gentlemen, not philosophers, rule, that women are educated differently and lead very different lives from men, and that the family is retained.

Another perspective on the similarities of the reforms of Praxagora and Socrates is to be found in adopting the point of view of the found-

ers. The question *cui bono* can be usefully posed about foundlings as well as about crimes. In the case of Praxagora, it is clear that her whole institution is an elaborate device to profit her. She is a young woman married to an old man. To satisfy her natural longings she has in the old order to commit adultery, to break the law. Under the new dispensation a young woman who sleeps with an old man—which Praxagora already does—has the right to make love to a young man. Praxagora's desires have, thus, become legitimate. Similarly, Socrates, in the *Apology*, says that he deserves to be fed at public expense in the prytaneum like the Olympic victors (*Apology*, 36c-e; *Republic*, 465c-d). The *Republic* is an outline of the only regime where he would be guaranteed dinner in the prytaneum and be delivered of his persistent domestic problems; or, to put it less poetically, this is the only regime in which philosophy would be respected. Philosophy, like adultery, is illegal in Athens, for the philosophers do not believe in the gods of the city and corrupt the young. In the kallipolis philosophy would no longer be a crime; the farmers would produce food for the philosophers and the auxiliaries would protect them. Praxagora and Socrates both attempt to make their profoundest longings legal. In order to do so they have to make reforms so sweeping as to deny the essential demands of political life (e.g., the prohibition against incest). There is no regime which can serve them, and they must continue to make do as criminals.

Now, what precedes is nothing but a series of hints. An adequate articulation of the issues involved in Socrates' playful competition with Aristophanes is the work of a lifetime. The real questions will only come to light by looking at the texts in full consciousness that we do not now know what the real questions are, let alone the answers to them. Plato's way is to think about the seemingly trivial or outrageous proposals of a Praxagora. We must imitate that way if we are to understand not only ancient thought but the permanent human problems, problems no longer quite visible to us.

CONCLUSION

My differences with Hall come down to whether philosopher-king is a compound formula, joining two distinct activities and, thus, violating the rule of justice, one man-one job, as I insist, or whether philosopher and king are two words for the same thing, as Hall insists.

I believe Hall produces no evidence for his belief. Socrates' irony, which he claims I invoke as a *deus ex machina*, is to be found in the relation of his speeches to his deeds and his treatment of his various companions. It is present to every eye, and only by looking the other way can the problems I say need explaining be ignored or denied. As I pondered what separates me from Hall, I came to the conclusion that he misunderstands how political I take Socrates to be and how much attention I think he paid to particulars (as opposed to ideas). In other words, he does not pay attention to what I say about the cave or to the cave itself. The philosopher, of course, begins, as do all men, in the cave; and, to go Hall one better, he pays the strictest attention not only to particular or individual things but to their shadows. But the difference between him and other men is that he learns that they are only shadows—shadows which give us access to the truth—whereas they believe the shadows are the real things and are passionately committed to that belief. That is what cave-dwelling means. The cave must always remain cave, so the philosopher is the enemy of the prisoners since he cannot take the nonphilosopher's most cherished beliefs seriously. Similarly, Socrates does care for other men, but only to the extent that they, too, are capable of philosophy, which only a few are. This is an essential and qualitative difference, one that cannot be bridged and that causes fundamental differences of interest. Only they are capable of true virtue (518b-519b). To the extent that the philosopher turns some men to the light, he robs the cave-dwellers of allies. It is not because he lives in the sun, out of the cave, that I say the philosopher is at tension with the city; his problem is due precisely to the fact the he is in it, but in a way different from that of other men. This, however, should be the theme for an ongoing discussion. I only hope that it is clear that Hall's criticism has not settled the issue.

NOTES

1. 471c-473b; 475d-480a; 485a-b; 510a-511d; 514a-519c; 532a-b; 540a-b. Plato surely makes a distinction between the practical and theoretical lives. Hall only introduces a red herring when he says I took the distinction from Aristotle. There is a difference between them concerning the distinction between *phronesis* and *sophia*, but that is irrelevant here. Everything I said was based on Plato. Hall, on the other hand, comes dangerously close to saying that knowing is making, a view to be found only in modern thought.

2. The statement at 497a, an intermediary stage in the discussion of philosophy and the city, need mean nothing more than that the philosopher would find more encouragement in such a city than elsewhere. Cf. 528b-c.

3. At 487a justice appears in the list of virtues belonging to the philosopher. By 536a it has dropped out.

Allan Bloom is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. Among his works are Shakespeare's Politics and a translation of Plato's Republic with commentary.